

L-O-V-E in the Summer by JoMo3

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Summary:

a 5 part Mileven/Jancy summertime fic.

1. All That I Can Give to You

It was the last day of school in the Hawkins, Indiana public schools. Kids were cleaning out their desks and lockers while daydreaming about how they would spend their summer vacation. Parents were coming up with last minute plans to keep their children busy over the break. And those in relationships were counting down the minutes (quite literally) until they could see their significant others.

Tick, tick...

Eleven Hopper was sitting in the Byers' kitchen, getting her bi-weekly reading and writing tutoring from Joyce. Though her physical body was in the kitchen, her mind was elsewhere, thinking about a certain freckled young man.

"El, sweetie?"

El, who'd been staring at the ticking clock, snapped out of her daydream and focused on Joyce. "Sorry," she mumbled.

Joyce smiled. "Looking at the clock is not going to make the school day end any faster. Mike will get here as soon as school is over. *You*, however," Joyce said, sliding a basal reader to El, "Still have some reading to do."

El blushed. "Yes, ma'am."

Turning the book towards her, she began reading the pages Joyce had pointed out. But every few sentences, she would glance at the clock, as if looking at it would speed up time.

Tick, tick...

At Hawkins High School, the dismissal bell had just rang. Nancy Wheeler said goodbye to a few classmates and wished them a good summer as she headed towards the doors by student parking. She watched as a sea of jubilant students passed until she saw who she was looking for. A smile spread to her lips as her boyfriend, Jonathan Byers, headed her way.

“Hey,” he said, giving her a small smile.

“Hey yourself,” she said, walking next to him. The two walked out to the parking lot towards Jonathan’s car.

“How was your last class?” she asked him.

“Great. Mr. Parker gave us the whole time to develop whatever we wanted to before we left. I’ve got a few I want to show you,” he said.

“Cool.” They arrived at his car. He opened the passenger door for her, but before she got in, she looked at him expectantly. Smiling, he put a hand on her hip and brought her close for a kiss. Pulling apart, they smiled as she got in and he closed the door behind her.

Getting in on his side, he asked, “So...Benny’s?”

“Benny’s,” she said, agreeing.

Giving her another smile, he started the car and the two drove out of the parking lot.

Down the street at Hawkins Middle School, Dustin, Lucas, Mike, and Will were sitting in their last class of the day, English lit, and trying to remain focused on what their teacher was saying. But knowing that fifty minutes was all that stood in the way of almost three months of freedom was making it difficult.

Dustin had his head in his hand, trying to stay awake.

Lucas was sitting up and trying to nonchalantly glance at his crush, Lucy Howard.

Will was trying very hard to stifle a yawn, but failing.

And Mike, of course, was thinking about Eleven. This would be her first summer and for the past few days he had been compiling a list of things to do with her in his notebook. So far he had:

-get ice cream

-go swimming

-fireworks on the Fourth of July

-catching fireflies

-asking her to be my girlfriend

-telling her I love her

He was planning on doing two of the things on the list today. This afternoon after school the boys were going to the local pool, and Mike was going to *finally* ask El to be his girlfriend. He'd been teased about it enough, even though he already figured they were boyfriend and girlfriend. They held hands and had kissed a handful of times since Valentine's Day, but he hadn't officially asked her to be his girlfriend yet. As for some of the other things on his list...

Dustin's head landed with a smack on his desk as he lost his battle with staying awake, making Mike jump in his chair and the rest of the class laugh. Dustin, turning pink, rubbed his forehead where it had made contact with the desk. Seeing the teacher glaring at him, he offered a shy smile and muttered, "Sorry."

When the bell finally rang, the boys excitedly grabbed their backpacks and darted out of the room, smiles on their faces.

"I can't believe you fell asleep," Will said to Dustin.

"It was so *boring* . Why can't we play games on our last day, like we did in fifth grade?" Dustin responded.

"You're lucky it's the last day and Mr. Townsend didn't...oof!" Mike exclaimed, bumping into someone. He sighed when he saw who it was-Troy.

"Watch it, Frog Face," Troy said, sneering at Mike.

Mike realized he'd dropped his notebook, and before he could stop him, Troy had snatched it up. Grinning, he read it over. "Asking her to be my girlfriend? Tell her I *love* her? Who is this for, Wheeler? Fairy-boy here?" he asked, looking at Will.

Mike, feeling his face heat up, snatched the notebook from Troy's hands. "Mind your own damn business," he said.

"What'd you say to me, Frog?" Troy said, getting into Mike's face.

"Boys!" Mr. Clarke called, standing outside the door of his classroom. Troy backed up.

"Is there a problem here?" Mr. Clarke asked.

"No," Troy said. Then, softly to Mike, added "You're lucky, Wheeler." He bumped Mike's shoulder as he walked away.

Mike picked up his backpack and stuffed his notebook into it.

“Ask her to be my girlfriend?” Will asked.

“Tell her I love her?” Dustin asked.

“I don’t want to talk about it,” Mike said. Zipping his backpack, he glanced at Lucas. “What’s wrong with you? You’re quieter than normal.”

“Nothing,” Lucas said.

“Thinking about Lucy, huh?” Will asked.

“No,” Lucas said. He barely hid a small smile.

“You think she’s going to be at the pool?” Mike asked.

“Maybe,” Lucas said.

“Lucky,” Dustin said. Turning to Will, he said “Well, I guess it’ll be just you and me, Byers.” He playfully wrapped an arm around Will’s neck. “Hopefully this time you won’t pee in the pool.”

Blushing, Will said “That was *one time* . And I was *seven*.”

“Come on,” Mike said, “Let’s go.”

At Benny’s, Jonathan and Nancy sat in a corner booth, talking about their summer plans. Of course, they wanted to spend as much time together as possible, but they were also realistic. They both had jobs that would keep them busy. Jonathan worked as a grocery clerk at Big Buy; Nancy had recently begun working at a pet store downtown, and occasionally babysat.

“Are you going to eat those?” Nancy asked, taking a few of Jonathan’s fries with a smile on her face.

“Yes,” Jonathan said, reaching for the fries, but grinned as he

reached too late. Nancy put them into her mouth, winking at him.

Shaking his head, Jonathan put his bag on the table. "Let me show you some of the photos," he said, digging into his bag.

Nancy smiled as he brought out a manilla folder. Pushing his near empty plate aside, he put the folder in front of him. Turning it around so it was facing Nancy, he opened it so she could see the pictures easier.

She flipped through the photos, and couldn't keep a smile off her face. The pictures ranged in subject; there were pictures of Jonathan's mother, Joyce; two of his brother, mugging for the camera. These were followed by a few pictures he'd taken for the school yearbook, then pictures of Mike and Eleven, sitting on a swing together (they're so cute! Nancy exclaimed), Dustin and Lucas wrestling each other.

And, of course, there were a few pictures of Nancy. Pointing to one in particular, Jonathan said, "That one's my favorite."

It was a simple black and white photo, taken in her bedroom one day when he'd gone over to help her study. She was looking at the camera with a sly smile.

"Jonathan, you are so talented," she told him.

He shook his head, blushing a little. "They're okay."

"I mean it." She looked him in the eyes. "I wish I was this good at... *anything*."

He smiled. "Thank you." Reaching across the table, he held her hand. "So...how do you want to spend our first evening of summer break?"

Nancy smiled at him mischievously. "I have an idea."

Back at the Byers, El was writing a paragraph to answer the question that Joyce had asked about her reading. She was halfway through citing her evidence when she heard the front door open and the excited voices of Will and Mike.

Sitting up, she smiled.

The two boys came into the kitchen, Mike's eyes lighting up when he saw her.

"Hey, El," he said.

"Hi." She started to get up to greet him when Joyce told her to sit back down and finish her work.

The two boys went into Will's room. When El finished, she gave Joyce a hug and went to join them.

When she went in, the boys were zipping up their backpacks. Will took one look at his two friends and decided they needed some space. Grabbing his backpack, he told them he'd wait for them outside.

Smiling at Mike, Eleven walked up to him. Standing on tiptoe, she gave him a kiss. "How did your last day go?"

Smiling back at her, Mike took her hand. "Pretty good. I bumped into Troy, though."

"Mouth breather," she said, shaking her head.

"Do you have your stuff?"

She nodded her head. "I brought it with me this morning."

Mike had called her last night and told her about going to the pool, and Hopper had stopped by a department store to buy her a one-piece swimsuit.

Mike picked up his backpack, and the two walked hand in hand out of Will's room. Will was waiting for them by the front door, looking

ready to go.

“You all have fun,” Joyce called to the group.

“We will, mom, bye!” Will called back as he and his friends went out the door.

A short bike ride later and the three were at the pool. This being the last day of school and the unofficial first day of summer, the place was filled with kids; some with parents, some without. Mike and Will parked their bikes in the bike rack in front. After paying to get in, they walked towards the locker room.

Stopping outside the doors, Mike nodded towards the boy's locker room. To El, he said, “We’ve gotta go in here, okay? After you change, there’ll be a door that’ll take you out to the pool area. We’ll meet you out there.”

El nodded her head, a little hesitant to go into the locker room by herself. Sensing she was nervous, Mike gave her hand a squeeze. “You’ll be fine.”

She smiled, then turned and went in.

Mike watched her go in until the door shut behind her, then he and Will went into the boy's locker room.

It was noisy and smelly, like most boys locker rooms are, and the two found a pair of lockers in a corner. And, as luck would have it, Dustin and Lucas were already there, finishing getting changed.

“Took you guys long enough,” Dustin said to Will and Mike.

“El wasn’t finished with her lesson, so we had to wait,” Will responded.

“Yeah, El,” Lucas said, grinning at Mike. “Bet you can’t wait to see her in her swimsuit, huh?”

“Shut up,” Mike said, though he couldn’t keep a grin off his face.

After Will and Mike changed, the four boys went out to the pool area. After a few minutes, they saw El come out of the girls locker room, nervously looking for her friends.

“El! We’re over here!” Mike called. Her eyes met his, and she walked over, Mike blushing when he saw her up close in her one-piece.

“Nice suit,” Dustin told her.

“Yeah, really nice,” Mike said.

She smiled. “Thank you.” It was a simple navy blue swimsuit, but the way it hugged her made Mike turn pink.

“Last one in buys ice cream,” Will called, running into the water. The rest of the group joined him, with Mike and El being the last in.

The kids spent the next hour in the water, splashing each other and getting wet.

Dustin challenged everyone to see who could swim one end to the other in the deep end. The boys agreed. Eleven, not a great swimmer, decided to watch from the shallow end.

The boys swam to the other side of the pool. Dustin called “On your mark, get set, go!” and the boys were off.

It was a close race until the end, with Will beating Mike by a close margin.

After racing, Mike turned to look for El, and saw a boy talking to her.

Feeling color come to his cheeks, he asked “Who’s that?”

His friends looked towards where he nodded.

“It’s Eric Connors,” Lucas said.

“Why’s he talking to El?” Mike asked.

Grinning, Dustin said, “Maybe he thinks she looks cute in that swimsuit. Better go stop him, Wheeler.”

Taking a breath, Mike swam over to the two; Eleven was sitting on the edge of the pool, her legs dangling in the water. Eric was kneeling next to her. Both of them looked up when Mike reached them.

“Hey, Mike,” Eric said.

Mike was surprised Eric knew his name. “Hey, Eric. What’s going on?”

“Nothing,” Eric said. “I was just talking to El, here. You guys know each other, huh?”

“Yeah, she’s..she’s my girlfriend,” Mike said, climbing out of the water and sitting next to Eleven.

“Oh. Okay. Well, nice meeting you, El,” Eric said, standing up and walking away.

Eleven turned to Mike. “Your girlfriend?”

Mike, blushing, shook his head. “I’m sorry, El. I know we haven’t talked about that yet, but...I don’t know, I didn’t like him talking to you, because...”

“Mike.”

He stopped talking and looked at her.

She put a hand on his cheek. “You don’t need to be...jell...us?”

“Jealous?”

She nodded her head. “He was asking me who I was here with, and if I wanted to come over with him and his friends.”

“Oh.”

“But I told him I was here with *my* friends.”

“Oh.” Mike looked over at Eric, who was talking to a group of kids.

“So why are you jealous?” she asked.

Mike shrugged his shoulders and looked at his lap. "I don't know. I thought that...maybe you'd like him or something."

"He is nice," El said, nodding. "But he's not you."

Mike smiled. "He's not me?"

"No. You're my favorite, Mike."

He grinned. "You're my favorite, too."

The two leaned in to share a kiss when suddenly they were splashed with water. Pulling apart, they saw Lucas, Dustin, and Will laughing.

"Oh, you are *dead*," Mike said, hopping into the water, Eleven right behind him.

In the parking lot of Hawkins' movie theater, Jonathan rolled down his car window as he caught his breath.

"What time is it?" he asked Nancy, as she straightened her shirt.

She glanced at her watch. "The movie starts in five minutes," she said with a smile.

Nancy's idea had been to see *A View to a Kill* at the movie theater, but they had some time to kill before it started. So the two had parked Jonathan's car in the back of the parking lot and passed the time making out in his car.

Jonathan nodded his head, finally getting his heavy breathing back to normal. "Are you ready?"

Still smiling, she leaned over and gave him a kiss. "I'm ready. You, however, may want to, uh...wipe your face."

Jonathan raised an eyebrow as he turned the rearview mirror to get a

look at himself. He turned red when he saw all of the lipstick all over his face.

“Uh...thanks,” he said, running his sleeve over his face. Then, turning to Nancy, asked, “Better?”

“Better.”

The two got out of the car and, holding hands, walked towards the theater.

Back at the pool, the fivesome spent the rest of the afternoon chasing each other and splashing one another. As the sun started to set, and people started leaving, Mike went to the concession stand and bought popsicles and ice cream for everyone before they closed up. Will and Dustin took theirs and sat in some newly available deck chairs. Lucas thought he spotted his crush, and went to talk to her.

Mike and Eleven sat on the edge of the pool, legs in the water, eating their cherry popsicle (El) and ice cream sandwich (Mike). Eleven was wrapped in a towel in an attempt to dry off. After a few minutes, El looked at Mike with a smile.

“What?” Mike asked.

“You called me your girlfriend,” she said.

“Huh?”

“Earlier. When Eric was here. You told him I was your girlfriend.”

“Oh, yeah,” Mike said, blushing. “I’m sorry about that.”

Eleven kept her eyes on him as she waited for what she knew was

coming.

Sighing, Mike said, "Hey, El?"

"Yes?"

"Would you be my girlfriend?"

Smiling, she nodded her head. "Yes, Mike."

"Cool."

"Cool," she repeated, lying her head on his shoulder.

Mike smiled. This was going to be a great summer.

2. A Game for Two

It was Saturday morning, which meant the Wheelers were gathered at the breakfast table. This morning they had a visitor in Eleven, who sat between Mike and his sister as they all dug into their waffles and bacon strips.

“So what do you two have planned for today?” Karen Wheeler asked her son.

“We’re going to go see a movie later with the boys,” Mike answered.

“Oh yeah? What are you going to see?”

“The Goonies,” Mike said.

“What’s a Goonie?” Ted Wheeler asked, looking up from his newspaper.

“I don’t know,” Mike answered, shrugging his shoulders.

“What about you, sweetheart?” Karen asked her eldest daughter.

“Well, after tutoring,” Nancy said, nodding at Eleven, “I’ve got to go to work.”

“What time did you get back last night?” Karen asked.

Nancy’s eyes got big. “Um...around ten.”

Mike grinned, knowing that his sister was lying. Turning to his girlfriend, he asked, “Do you want my other waffle? I don’t think I can eat anymore.”

Smiling, she scooted his waffle onto her plate. As she reached for the syrup, the phone rang in the kitchen.

“Ted, honey, will you get that?” Karen asked.

“Yep,” Ted said, standing and lumbering into the kitchen. A minute later, he came back. “Nancy, it’s for you, a boy. Steve?”

Nancy looked confused. "You mean Jonathan, dad. I'm dating Jonathan, remember?"

"I know. But it's Steve," Ted said, sitting down.

Nancy furrowed her brow as she went to the kitchen. Picking up the receiver, she answered, "Hello?"

"Hey, Nancy, how are you?" It was Steve.

"Um...fine. What do you want, Steve?"

"I need to talk to you about something. Can I come by later?"

"Uh, I don't think that's such a good idea. What do you need?"

He sighed, then continued. "I can't really talk about it right now." She could hear someone angrily shouting in the background. "Can I come by your job later?"

"Um...sure. I get off work at 5."

"Alright. Pet store, right?"

"Right."

"Okay. Thanks." He hung up.

Still confused, Nancy hung up the phone. She walked back into the dining room, where Mike and Eleven were clearing their plates.

"Is something wrong?" Karen asked.

Nancy shook her head as she sat down. "No. Everything's fine."

Eleven and Nancy then spent the next two hours at the table as they worked on math. Mike tried to join them at the table to work on the next campaign, but Nancy shooed him away into the basement.

Down there he found Holly, playing with her Barbie dolls and half-watching Snow White.

"Holly, go back upstairs," he told her.

"Nuh-uh," she said, shaking her head. "Mom said to stay down here."

As if on cue, Karen Wheeler came downstairs with a basket full of laundry. Looking at her two youngest children, she asked, "What's wrong?"

"Can't Holly go upstairs? I was going to write the next campaign."

Karen rolled her eyes. "Mike, I need her to stay down here, okay? I've got laundry to do, I've got to vacuum. Your father's about to go golf with his friends. I need you to watch her for a bit."

"Well, then, is it alright if I turn off the TV?" Mike asked, going for the remote.

"No, I'm watching!" Holly cried.

"No you're not, you're playing with your dolls!" Mike responded.

"Mike, let her watch her movie. You can still plan your....whatever."

"Cam *paign*," Mike corrected her. "Can't she watch it upstairs?"

"No, the vack oom is too loud!" Holly said.

This time, Mike rolled his eyes.

"Mike, just sit down. It'll only be a few minutes," his mother said.

Sighing, Mike took a seat at the game table. He tried to spend the time working on the campaign, but couldn't concentrate. Between the washing machine chugging away, and Holly playing and "watching" Snow White, he couldn't focus. Sighing, he took his notebook from his backpack and found the list he'd started about El.

- *get ice cream*

- *go swimming*

-fireworks on the Fourth of July

-catching fireflies

- asking her to be my girlfriend

-telling her I love her

As he looked over the list, he felt proud that he'd accomplished half of the things so far in just one day.

He started thinking about the other things to do; Fireworks, he obviously couldn't do for another few weeks. They could catch fireflies soon. As for the love part...

Ever since Valentine's Day, when he'd made his feelings known, every so often the "I word" crossed his mind. When it had first popped into his head, he figured he was too young. And he knew he *was* too young, but he also knew that he was in love with Eleven, and that she was the only girl for him.

As if the TV screen knew what was going on in his head, the Prince was giving Snow White the kiss of true love.

Rolling his eyes at this coincidence, Mike closed his notebook.

When the tutoring time was up, Eleven gathered her things and went to join Mike in the basement. Karen had taken Holly upstairs minutes ago.

Smiling as she descended the stairs, she said "Hi, *boyfriend* ."

Sitting at the game table, Mike blushed. "Hi, *girlfriend* ."

She sat next to him at the table.

"The boys are coming over pretty soon, so we can go to the movie."

Eleven nodded her head. "Is it...scary?"

Mike shook his head. "I don't think so."

She lay her head on his shoulder.

"How was tutoring?"

She sighed. "Boring."

"At least it'll be over soon, right? And you can join us in school in the fall."

"Yeah..."

Eleven's tutoring was supposed to end in mid July, and she would join the boys at school in the fall.

Sitting up, she looked at him and smiled. "What?" he asked.

"Nothing," she said. Leaning forward, she closed the distance between them and put a kiss on his lips.

Smiling into it, he kissed her back, just as there was a knock at the basement door.

Sighing, Mike stood up and answered it, where Lucas, Dustin, and Will greeted him on the other side.

"Are you guys ready?" Dustin asked. "Or are you two in here sucking face?"

"We're ready," Mike said. Turning to El, he asked, "Ready?"

Nodding her head, she picked up her backpack.

The group rode their bikes to The Hawk, Hawkins' movie theater. When they arrived, Lucas let out a moan, as it appeared they'd decided to come on the day everyone else had chosen to see a movie.

El and the boys got in line; Will and Lucas in the front, Dustin in the middle, and Eleven and Mike in the rear.

Eleven reached for Mike's hand, and entwined hers with his. "Are you okay?" he asked.

She nodded her head as she took in the crowd. The only other time she'd been to the theater was when the group had come to see *The Breakfast Club*; she preferred watching movies at either the Byers' or Wheelers' homes.

But the boys had been wanting to see *The Goonies* so badly that she had agreed to go with them to see what the fuss was all about. And now that she was officially Mike's girlfriend, she wanted to spend as much time with him as possible.

"This line is so *slow*," Dustin complained.

"Gee, Dustin, you think?" Lucas asked.

"Calm down, we're almost there," Will interjected.

The group eventually made it to the front, where they each paid for their tickets (Mike, ever the gentleman, paid for Eleven's) and they then made their way to the concession stand.

"Oh, great, *another* line," Lucas complained as he saw the wait in front of them.

"You don't *have* to get anything," Mike told him.

Lucas shrugged his shoulders. "What's the point in seeing a movie if you don't have snacks?"

Ignoring him, Mike looked at El. "Do you still want Sno-Caps?"

Eleven smiled and nodded. "Yes."

Mike shook his head. He thought Sno-Caps were disgusting, but for some reason El loved them. Whenever he would go to the movies with the boys, she would ask him to bring her back Sno-Caps.

So the group got in the second line. Will stood in the front, as he was the most patient of the group. Lucas was behind him, impatiently pacing. Dustin stood next to Will, chatting about something. And Mike and Eleven were thinking about each other; so much so that it surprised Mike when he was bumped from behind.

Ignoring it, he kept looking forward, but got bumped again. Turning around, he saw it was Troy.

“Watch it, Frog Face,” Troy said with a grin.

“Leave us alone,” Mike said, facing forward again.

“Or what?” Troy asked.

“Go away,” El said, glaring at Troy.

Troy’s grin got wider. “What’re you doing with this loser?”

“She said go away,” Mike said, with a hint of anger in his voice.

Still with a smirk, Troy went to the other line.

“Mouth breather,” El said under her breath.

The boys and Eleven eventually made it to the front. Dustin ordered a large popcorn, Will got a soda, Lucas got Twizzlers, and Mike bought a popcorn for he and El to share, as well as her favorite candy.

After they paid and went to head into the theater, Troy, who’d snuck up on them, tripped Mike, sending him crashing to the floor, popcorn flying everywhere.

Sick of it, Mike stood up in a fury, fists balled, but Lucas and Dustin held him back. The manager came over and calmed the situation, giving Mike a free popcorn to make up for the spilled one.

Lucas, Will, and Dustin went into the theater to get seats while Mike and El waited for the popcorn.

“Mike?” Eleven asked quietly.

He was still fuming from embarrassment and anger. "What, El?" he asked, a little angrier than usual.

She took his hand. "It's okay."

"No, it's not. He's such a...piece of shit."

El's eyes widened. Mike didn't usually swear, she was surprised.

"Mike."

He looked at her, and the sight of her doe eyes looking into his calmed him down. "I'm sorry, El. I'm so sorry."

"It's okay," she repeated.

"No, I didn't mean to talk to you like that. I'm sorry."

She gave him a smile as they waited for the popcorn. Once they got it, they joined their friends in the theater.

Pretty soon after that, the movie started. The boys enjoyed it, laughing at a lot of the parts. Eleven even got into it, after not thinking she'd like it. The boys in the movie made her think of the boys sitting next to her.

About two thirds into it, she looked at Mike and noticed something strange. He sensed her eyes on him, and turned to look at her. "El?" he asked.

She reached over and pulled something from his hair and held it for him to see. "You had popcorn in your hair," she said.

Mike looked at it quizzically, took it, shrugged his shoulders, and put it on the ground.

Things went well for a few more minutes until he felt something in

his hair again. Reaching up, he took another popcorn from his head. "What the hell?" he asked.

Behind him, he heard snickering. Looking over his shoulder, he saw Troy and James two rows back, laughing quietly and holding a bucket of popcorn.

Eleven could see the anger building in his eyes. She put a hand on his arm, and said "Mike. Let it go."

He turned back around, anger still flashing in his eyes. He tried to watch the movie, but a minute later, a piece of popcorn hit the back of El's head, and that was the last straw for Mike. He started to angrily get up, but Lucas and Eleven pulled him back down.

"I'm gonna *kill* them," Mike said.

"*Mike*," El said, seriously.

He looked at her. She had a smile on her face and a finger to her lips. "Shh."

Behind them, they heard "Hey!"

Mike turned and saw that Troy's drink had spilled into his lap, and James had the popcorn bucket on his head.

Smiling, Mike looked at El; she was wiping away the blood that was trickling down her nose.

He took her hand. The group finished the movie undisturbed.

All through her work shift, Nancy couldn't stop wondering what it was Steve wanted to talk to her about. She hoped and prayed he wasn't trying to get back together with her; that would be terrible. She was extremely happy with Jonathan.

What else could it be? She kept going through worst case scenarios in her head: he was dying, he was moving, Tommy was missing, he needed a job, he saw Jonathan with another girl...

She shook her head at that last one. She *knew* that wasn't it.

She was so lost in thought that she put the wrong kind of fish in a tank with another kind, and had to fish them out with a net before her boss gave her a talking to.

By the time her shift ended, she still hadn't figured out why Steve wanted to see her. And, lo and behold, as she walked into the parking lot, there he was, his car parked next to hers.

"Hey," he said, smiling at her as she approached.

"Hi," she answered. "What do you want, Steve?"

He sighed. "Well..."

When *The Goonies* was over, the group biked home, excitedly discussing the movie. All of the boys thought it was one of the best movies they'd ever seen, almost up there with the *Star Wars* films.

The group biked to Mike's house, and accepted Karen Wheeler's offer to stay for dinner. Halfway through the meal, Nancy joined them at the dinner table. She looked a little worried.

"Everything okay?" Karen asked her eldest daughter.

"Yeah, mom," Nancy said, settling into a seat next to Mike. "Everything is fine."

After eating Mrs. Wheeler's casserole, the boys and El went down into the basement to play some games. After going through *Uno* as well as the early stages of *Monopoly*, the group decided to call it a night.

As they went out to get their bikes, Mike noticed Eleven had stopped

and was staring at something.

“El?” he asked.

“What are those?” she asked.

Mike followed her pointing finger, and smiled as he realized he’d be able to cross something else off of his list.

“Those are fireflies,” he told her.

“Cool!” Dustin said, putting his bike back down. “You have any jars?”

Mike nodded his head, as he sprinted inside to get jars for the group. When he returned, the five of them spent a few minutes walking around the Wheeler’s yard, carefully catching fireflies.

Eleven was having a hard time catching any.

“Here,” Mike said when he noticed. “You wait for one of them to light up...”

“I *am*,” she said, getting impatient. Dustin had already collected 3, and Lucas and Will had both caught 2.

“I know,” Mike said. “But...there!” He walked briskly to where a light had shone, and carefully scooped a fly between the jar and its lid. Giving her the jar, he said, “Now you try.”

Taking the jar, Eleven nodded her head. Looking around the yard, she eventually saw a light shine. She excitedly tiptoed to where it was, and, going extra slow so as not to scare it, she scooped a firefly into the jar. The look of joy on her face when she turned to Mike made his heart melt.

“I did it! I did it!” she cried.

“Good for you, El,” Dustin said, coming over and looking into her jar. “Whoa, and it’s a big one. Nice catch.”

Eleven beamed.

Mike walked over to her, as she turned the jar in her hands. Looking at him, she said, "What do you do with them after you catch it?"

Mike shrugged his shoulders. "Some people keep them. Some people will let them go."

Her face dropped. "Won't they die if you keep them locked up?"

"Uh, I don't know, I never really thought about it," he said, shrugging his shoulders. "I guess."

She nodded her head. "I'm going to let mine go. I want to show Hopper, first. But then I will let it go."

Mike nodded his head as she leaned in and kissed his cheek. "Thank you for helping me, Mike."

"Anytime, El."

The sun had almost set by the time Mike biked Eleven back to her home. The two chatted about the day, as well as their favorite parts of the movie as El clutched the jar to her chest with one hand and clutched Mike's waist with the other.

When they arrived at Hopper's trailer, Mike slowed down and parked the bike as he walked Eleven to the door. She took his hand as they made their way up the steps.

"I'm sorry I...lost my temper with Troy," Mike said, looking at his feet.

"It's okay," she said. "He's a mouth breather."

"Yeah, I know, but...I shouldn't have let him get to me."

"No, you shouldn't," she said, which caused him to look up and blush with embarrassment.

"But I still like you," she continued.

"I like you, too," he replied.

Smiling at each other, both leaned in and kissed. Mike smiled as their lips touched, El's lips still tasted like chocolate from her Sno-Caps.

They pulled apart, Mike a little pink. "Hey, do you, uh..want to go on an official date with me?"

Eleven tilted her head. "Official?"

"Well, y'know, since we're boyfriend and girlfriend now, I thought maybe we could go on a date somewhere."

Smiling, she nodded her head. "Okay."

"Cool."

As if on cue, Hopper's truck rambled up the dirt road and parked in front of the trailer. He climbed out and saw the two teens standing in front of the front door.

"Hi, Hop," Eleven said.

"Hey, kid," he said as he walked their way. Looking at her boyfriend, he muttered, "Mike."

Mike blushed even more. "Uh...hi, chief." The two teens moved to the side as Hopper unlocked the door.

"Look," Eleven said, holding up her firefly jar.

Hopper knelt down to look into it. "Hey, pretty cool, El. You caught your first firefly."

"I'm going to let him go, though," she said.

"That's pretty noble of you," Hopper said, standing back up. He ruffled her hair. "I'll give you two some privacy," Hopper said. "But remember, El, you've got dishes to do."

"Yes," she said.

When Hopper closed the door, Eleven turned back to Mike. "So.

When?”

“Huh?”

“The date?”

“Oh! Um...how about on Monday? That’ll give me time to think of something.”

“Okay,” she said, smiling. She gave his hand a squeeze. “Good night, Mike.”

“Night, El.”

They pecked lips once more before El went inside and Mike climbed on his bike to head home, already thinking of places to go on their date.

3. Two in Love

Notes for the Chapter:

I really enjoyed writing this chapter, and so far it's my favorite. It's really fluffy, though :)

Thank you so much to those who have read, commented, kudos'd, and subscribed. I really appreciate it.

I hope you enjoy reading this as much as I liked writing it.

When she woke up Sunday morning, Nancy felt a pang of guilt. She had talked to her boyfriend, Jonathan, last night on the phone, but had left out one important detail:

Her talk with Steve.

She replayed the conversation she'd had in the parking lot yesterday afternoon again in her mind:

“Hey,” he’d said, smiling at her as she approached.

“Hi,” she answered. “What do you want, Steve?”

He sighed. “Well...uh...how do you like it here?”

She shrugged her small shoulders. “It’s nice. Pays pretty well.”

He nodded his head.

“What do you want, Steve?” she repeated, wanting to cut to the chase.

“I, uh...I need your help.”

“With what?”

“I, um...I got summer school.”

“Okay. Congratulations, then.”

“Yeah, ha,” he’d said, chuckling.

“What do you need my help for?”

“I wanted to know if you’d...tutor me.”

“Are you kidding?” she asked.

“No...” he said, trailing off.

“Wh...why *me* ?”

“Because it’s in calculus, and I knew how good you were at that.”

“Why not one of your friends?”

He shrugged. “Tommy’s working in his dad’s garage all summer; besides, he isn’t the smartest guy anyway. Carol’s working at a summer camp.” He got serious. “ *Please* , Nance. I can’t fail this class again. If I do I’m going to have to repeat, and my dad’s already threatened to send me to military school. I’ll pay you.”

She sighed. “I’ll think about it.”

He’d smiled, thanked her, and gotten into his car.

Now she didn’t know what to do. She could definitely use the money, but she didn’t know how Jonathan would feel about it...or how *she* felt about it.

Letting out a sigh, she got up from her bed. She had a date with Jonathan tomorrow night, the two of them were going to get dinner. She thought maybe she’d talk to her mother about what was bothering her.

Her mother, Karen, was in the kitchen, standing over the stove as she scrambled eggs. She smiled when she saw her daughter.

“Just in time to help,” she said.

Nodding, Nancy went into the cupboard to get plates to set the table. "Um, mom? Can I talk to you about something?"

"Sure, honey. Anything."

Putting the plates down onto the counter, Nancy began. "It's about Jonathan."

"Okay."

"And Steve."

Karen looked over her shoulder at Nancy. " *And* Steve?"

Nancy nodded.

"O *kay* ."

Nancy told her what Steve wanted, and how she hadn't told Jonathan about it yet, and how she wasn't sure what to do.

"Why don't you want to tell Jonathan?" Karen asked.

"Because he probably won't like that I'm talking to Steve."

"I see. And what are your thoughts on Steve?"

Nancy shrugged. "I don't know...I could use the money. But he was a jerk to me."

"Do you still have feelings for him?"

" *No* ," Nancy said with certainty.

Karen nodded her head. "Well...my advice...and choose to do whatever you want with it...I would tell Jonathan about it and see what he thinks."

Nancy sighed. "Okay. Thanks." Picking up the plates, she went to go and set the table.

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That afternoon, Eleven went with Hopper around town to run some errands. One of which took them over to the Byers' home.

Joyce said she needed help with her air conditioner, so Hopper stopped by to see if he could fix it. Eleven thought it was funny, if not cute; Hopper and Joyce obviously had feelings for one another, and she sometimes felt Hopper would look for any excuse to go over and see her, while Joyce would always call Hopper first if she needed something.

As they both went inside, Eleven went to join Will at the table as he drew, while Hopper went with Joyce to look at the air conditioning unit outside.

"What're you drawing?" El asked Will.

"It's, uh...a wizard," he said.

She smiled. "Will the Wise?"

Blushing, he nodded his head.

"It's nice."

"Thanks. You want to draw something?" he asked.

"That's okay," she said, shaking her head. "I'm not very good."

Will grinned, but slid a piece of paper over to her anyway. Reluctantly, El picked up a crayon and scribbled some things. She did like to draw, it was cathartic at times but she knew she wasn't nearly as talented as Will was. Heck, she wasn't even as talented as *Holly* was. But today it felt comforting, drawing with Will.

As she was the newest in their group, it had taken the two of them a while to open up to each other, especially with El's quiet manner. But Will was just as nice as the other boys (if not nicer than some) and the two had formed a bond over their shared past (that neither liked

talking about). They weren't as close as she was with the other boys, but they felt comfortable together.

"Mike called me this morning," Will said, picking up a green crayon. "He told me you two were going on a date tomorrow."

Eleven couldn't hide the blush that rose in her cheeks. "Yes."

"He really likes you, you know," Will said, pointing out the obvious.

"I know. And I...really like him."

"Yeah, I know," Will said, smiling at that understatement.

"Will?"

"Yeah?"

"Can I ask a question?"

"Yeah, of course."

She had been thinking about something recently. A few months ago, around Valentine's Day, she and Mike had a bit of a...falling out. During that time, when she wasn't talking to him, Hopper had said that Mike was "in love with her." It had taken a little digging, but she'd eventually found out the meaning of that phrase. When she and Mike had made up, she had thought he was going to say it, but he hadn't. Now that they were "official," that phrase, that "in love with" phrase, had popped back into her brain again.

"Do you think," she began, "Do you think...Mike is in..love..with me?"

Will let out a chuckle. "Of course he is, El. You can't tell?"

She smiled shyly and looked at the sketches on her paper. "I don't know."

"Before you even came back, I knew he was in love with you."

"Really?"

Will nodded. "Yeah. The way he talked about you, it was so obvious. And then when you came back, when I saw the two of you together, I knew. He definitely loves you, and I think now that you two are dating, I'm definitely sure he's in love *with* you."

El beamed with pride.

"Do you love him?"

She thought about that. She knew her feelings for those around her were love; she loved the Wheelers, the Byers, and the boys. But she knew she felt something more for Mike. Was that *being* in love?

"I...I don't know."

"Hm." Will went back to drawing, and El tried to do the same. Soon they were finished, Will's drawing of Will the Wise battling demons looking immaculate, while El's stick figures and hearts looked, well...ordinary.

A little bit later Hopper and Joyce came back in, Hopper telling Joyce she'd probably have to replace the A/C unit she had. Joyce didn't have the money right now so that wasn't what she wanted to hear.

"Thanks anyway, Jim," she said, touching his arm.

"Yeah, no problem," he said. Looking at his adopted daughter, he said, "You ready?"

She nodded as she stood up. "Bye, Will."

"Bye," he said, smiling at her.

"Everything okay?" Hopper asked when they got to the truck.

"Yes. Everything is okay."

"Well, alright, then," Hopper said, starting up the truck and pulling out of the driveway.

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That evening, Nancy still couldn't make up her mind. Finally, she decided she would call Jonathan and get his opinion.

Sitting in her room, she took a deep breath before picking up the receiver and dialing his phone number. After a few rings, Will picked up the phone and a moment later, she was talking to her boyfriend.

"Hey, how's it going?" he asked.

"I'm okay. How was work?"

He sighed. "Rough. I actually just got back, I'm about to hop in the shower."

Taking another deep breath, she asked "Hey, can I talk to you about something?"

"Yeah, sure. What is it?"

"Um..."

"Oh, sorry, before I forget, were you okay with eating at Paisano's tomorrow?"

Oh yeah, she remembered. Their date. "Yeah, that's fine."

"Ok, cool. Sorry to interrupt you. What did you want to talk about?"

"Um....it's nothing."

"Are you sure?"

"Yeah. It can wait."

"Well, alright, then. You're sure you're okay?"

"I'm fine. I'll see you tomorrow, okay?"

"Okay. Bye."

Hanging up, she face planted onto the bed and let out a moan. *Why hadn't she told him? Why was she making it so hard on herself??*

"Uh...is everything okay?" she heard Mike ask from her doorway.

Sitting up, she saw he was holding a blanket. "You know it's, like, 90 degrees, don't you?" she asked.

"Yeah. It's for a..." he stopped, blushing slightly.

"For what?"

"I'm going to take El on a picnic tomorrow."

"Aw, Mike, that's sweet of you."

"Thanks." He turned to leave, then stopped. "Are you okay?"

She nodded her head, though she really wasn't.

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The next morning Mike had a light breakfast so he would be able to eat on his picnic with El. She was riding over to the Wheeler's home on her own bike, and he was gathering food for them to store in his backpack.

He made two sandwiches, got a few juice boxes, and some Sno-Caps he'd bought from the store yesterday and gathered them together.

At a little past one o'clock he went outside and waited. Minutes later, Eleven arrived, her growing head of hair blowing in the wind. She wasn't particularly dressed up, since Mike had told her they were going to eat outside, but she looked nice in her jeans and colorful top. Mike wasn't really dressed up either, wearing one of his usual striped shirts and jeans. The two couldn't stop smiling at each other as El came up the driveway.

“Hey, El. You look beautiful,” he said.

“Thank you,” she said, smiling. “You look nice, too.”

“You ready?”

She nodded her head. He hopped on his bike and the two rode to the nearby park.

When they arrived after a ten minute ride, the two found a spot by a small pond. Mike lay down the blanket he’d found last night, and the two teens sat down across from each other.

“Mike?” she asked as he took the food from his backpack.

“Yeah?”

“What is a...pic..nic?”

He smiled. “It’s an outside date, El. I hope that’s okay.”

She nodded her head. Anytime she spent with Mike was more than “okay.”

The two dug into their sandwiches. Mike had added pickles to El’s as he knew she really liked them. Eleven told him about her theory on Hopper and Joyce, which got Mike laughing.

“Did you tell Will?” he asked between laughs.

“No,” she said. “I don’t think he would like it.”

“Probably not,” Mike agreed. He handed her a juice box.

“Thank you,” she said, taking it. “So...what do people do on dates?”

Mike shrugged. “Just talk, I guess. And spend time together.” After a moment of chewing, he asked “Are you liking summer so far?”

She nodded her head. “I get to see you guys all of the time, now.”

Mike smiled as he nodded as well. "When we were younger, our parents sometimes sent us to camp."

"Camp? What's that?"

"It's when you go somewhere in the woods with other kids, you sleep in cabins, you do activities."

"Is it fun?"

"Sometimes. I went when I was ten. I stepped in poison ivy, and that pretty much ruined it for me," he said, chuckling.

"What's poison ivy?"

"It's this plant that makes you itch."

She nodded, taking a sip of her juice box.

With a smile on his face, Mike said, "It can also make you ticklish. El, I think you're sitting in some!"

Surprised, she looked around her, as Mike leaned over and began tickling her sides.

She squealed in surprise as she nearly fell over, giggling and trying to push his hands away. Eventually she did fall to her side, her shirt coming up a little in the tumble, and Mike tickled her belly, which got her laughing even harder.

After a while, he stopped tickling. Still with a smile, he said "Oh, I guess you didn't sit in any after all."

"Mouth breather," she said jokingly as she pulled her shirt back down.

"I'm sorry, I couldn't help it," he said with a grin. Reaching into his backpack, he pulled out the Sno-Caps. "Want some?"

Nodding her head, she took the box, her mind thinking of how she could get back at him.

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Back at the Wheeler's, Jonathan had just arrived to pick up Nancy. Straightening his tie, he walked to the door and rang her doorbell. Karen opened the door.

"Hi, Jonathan," she said, smiling at him. "She'll be down in a minute."

The two made small talk, mostly about school and his mother, until Nancy came down, wearing a black dress that she knew Jonathan liked.

He did a double take when she arrived. Standing up, he said "Wow, Nancy. You look...amazing."

"You don't look so bad yourself," she said, kissing him on the cheek.

The two said goodbye to Karen and Ted, then went out the front door on the way to their date.

Watching them from the window, Ted shook his head. "Both of our kids are dating, Karen. When did this happen?"

"I know, right?" Karen asked, scooping up Holly. "You're *never* going to date, are you?" she asked her daughter.

Holly shrugged.

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Back at the park, they had packed the blanket and leftover things and were taking a walk.

"Can I ask you a question?" Eleven asked.

“Sure, of course,” Mike replied.

“What’s your favorite season?”

“My favorite season? Um...summer, I guess, since we don’t have to go to school.”

El nodded. “I like fall.”

“Why fall?”

“The colors,” she said, smiling. “Mr. Clarke was telling me about how the seasons happen.”

Mike nodded. “Can I tell you a secret?”

She stopped, nodding.

“I, uh..I made a list of things I wanted to do with you this summer.”

“Really?” she asked, surprised.

“Yeah.”

“What’s on it?”

“I can’t *tell* you. It’s a secret.”

“Then why did you tell me you made it?”

He shrugged. “I don’t know. I guess I just...wanted you to know.”

They sat down on a bench. Turning to Mike, she asked, “What *can* you tell me about it?”

He sighed. “Well...I wanted to go swimming with you, and get ice cream. And catch fireflies.”

She nodded.

“And, uh...I wanted to ask you to be my girlfriend.”

She smiled. “Are you done with your list?”

“No, not yet.”

“You can’t tell me what’s left?”

“No, I said it’s a secret.”

“*Please*,” she said, batting her eyes and making a sad face.

He huffed. “Okay. But this is pretty embarrassing.”

She clapped her hands in joy, breaking into a smile.

“It, uh...come here, I’ll whisper it to you.”

She moved closer, and he surprised her by kissing her. She pulled away after a moment, smiling at him. “Cheater.”

“I’m not going to tell you,” he said. “I want it to be a surprise.”

“Okay,” she said. After a moment, she said, “I am going to make a list, too.”

“Of summer things?”

“Now *you* have to wait.”

He sighed. “I guess that’s fair.”

After a moment, she asked, “I can tell you one thing.”

“Oh, yeah?” Mike asked, his interest piqued.

“Yes, but...I want to whisper it to you.”

Smiling, and thinking he was getting a kiss, he leaned in to hear her. “Yeah?”

She leaned in as if to kiss him, then tickled his sides, taking Mike by surprise. He nearly fell off the bench as he laughed, arms flailing as he tried to fight off her hands.

“Okay, okay! E...even!” he said between bursts of laughter.

She pulled her hands away, grinning at him. "Got you."

"Yeah, you got me," he said, smiling back at her.

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At the restaurant, Jonathan and Nancy were waiting for their entrees.

"I wanted to tell you," Jonathan said, "I got a job taking pictures at a wedding."

"Oh, yeah?" Nancy asked. "Whose?"

"Carl Hinton, he's this guy who works at the store with me. I showed him some of the pictures I'd shown you, and he liked them."

"That's great, Jonathan."

"It's just a small wedding, but it's a start, right?"

She reached over and squeezed his hand. "I'm so proud of you."

"Thanks."

Pulling her hand away, she said, "I, uh...I got offered a job tutoring someone."

"Yeah? Are you taking it?"

"I don't know," she said.

"You should," he suggested. "Do they pay well?"

"I don't know, we haven't worked that part out yet."

"Oh. Who is it?"

Nancy started to say Steve's name, but didn't want to ruin the moment. "It's just...some guy."

Their food came. After the waiter left, Jonathan asked, "Is it someone I know?"

"It's, uh...it's Steve."

Jonathan raised an eyebrow. "Steve *Harrington* Steve?"

She nodded.

"Why did he ask *you* ?"

She sighed. "He said because...it's calculus, and he has to do summer school, and his parents are freaking out."

"Oh." Jonathan thought for a moment, then asked "And you haven't answered him yet?"

She shook her head.

"Do you want to do it?"

She shrugged. "I don't know. I could use the money, but...it's Steve. And I didn't know what you'd think about it."

He nodded, twirling his pasta on his fork. "Do you want me to be honest?"

"Yes."

"I'd rather you didn't."

"Okay."

"It's just that...whoa, really? Just like that?"

She smiled. "You don't want me to. And I was already going back and forth, so...I'll tell him no."

He grinned. "Okay."

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At the park, Mike and Eleven were walking back to their bikes when El took his hand. Smiling at him, she said, "Thank you for the date."

"Thank's for coming. Sorry about the, uh...poison ivy thing," he added with a smile.

"Mouth breather," she said again, teasing him.

They got to their bikes. Mike asked, "You want me to ride home with you?"

She nodded. Then, feeling the urge, they moved closer, hugging one another. Mike went to kiss her cheek, but she tilted her head, and he got her forehead. They laughed about it before they brought their lips together, and kissed. El sighed into it, as Mike pulled her a little closer. This kiss was a bit more passionate than their usual ones, and neither was about to complain.

Mike still couldn't believe he had a girlfriend as wonderful as El. The "I" word popped into his head again, but he wasn't sure he was ready yet.

The two pulled apart, both smiling and blushing.

"Uh, are you, uh," he stuttered, "Ready to go?"

Smiling, she nodded her head.

When they arrived at Hopper's trailer, they slowed down and walked their bikes to the home. The sun was beginning to go down.

"I had a good time," Eleven told Mike as he walked her to the door.

"Me too. Maybe we can do it again sometime?"

She nodded enthusiastically, then gave him a hug. "Thank you for taking me out, Mike."

“Thank you for saying yes, El.” He cupped one of her cheeks and brought her closer. They kissed again, as she put her hands on his chest, moving closer. His free hand found hers, and they held hands while they kissed.

They pulled apart after a few minutes, blushing again. She gave him one more peck on the cheek as she went up the few steps to the door. “Bye, Mike.”

“Night, El.”

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By the time Jonathan brought Nancy home, they had both forgotten all about Steve, having spent the rest of the evening enjoying each other’s company and flirting over the table.

Pulling in front of the Wheeler home, Jonathan put the car in park as he turned to Nancy.

“So, uh, what’re you doing tomorrow?” he asked.

“I, um, don’t know yet,” she said, smiling. “If I get some free time, I’ll let you know.”

“Okay.”

The two leaned in and kissed gently. After a moment, however, it turned a little more heated. When Jonathan accidentally leaned onto the horn, making it go off, they stopped, both laughing.

“I don’t want your dad to come out and yell at me,” Jonathan said, wiping his mouth.

“I doubt that’ll happen,” Nancy said, smiling. “Walk me to my door?”

The two got out and walked up the driveway. At the door, she turned to Jonathan. “I’ll call you tomorrow?”

He nodded. "Goodnight."

"Night."

They kissed once more before he turned to leave. As he did, Mike rode his bike up the driveway, smiling from ear to ear. Mike said hi to Jonathan, and got off his bike and walked up the rest of the driveway.

"Good date, I guess," Nancy said to her brother as Jonathan backed out of the drive.

"It was awesome," Mike said.

"Mine was pretty awesome, too," Nancy said.

She started to unlock the door, when Mike said "Hey, is that Steve's car?"

Nancy stopped, and looked. Sure enough, parked in the street, was Steve's BMW.

Mike looked at his sister, curious what she was going to do.

"Go inside, I'll be in in a minute," she told him.

Shrugging his shoulders, Mike went inside.

As Nancy walked towards the street, Steve got out of his car.

"So you and Jonathan Byers, huh?" he asked.

"What do you want, Steve?" she asked him.

"Did you think about my offer?"

She shook her head. "I don't think so, Steve. It's too...weird."

"Nance, *please*"

"Steve, I can't."

He sighed. "Okay. Well, I guess I'll see you around, then."

She cocked an eyebrow. “What’re you going to do?”

He shook his head. “I’m gonna go *some* where. I’m not going to military school.”

She noticed his car was packed. “Are you running away?”

“I told you, I’m not going to go to military school.”

She let out a loud sigh. She didn’t think he was really going to run away, but this was ridiculous. “Alright, *fine* . Meet me Wednesday at noon at the library, okay? I’ll get you started.”

“Thanks, Nance, *thanks* !” he said, grinning. “How much you want for it?”

“We’ll deal with that later, okay? Just...go home.”

With one more smile, he got into his car and left, leaving Nancy to wonder what in the world she had just agreed to.

Notes for the Chapter:

Don't worry, some drama is coming...

4. Take My Heart (and please don't break it)

Tuesday morning Nancy woke up with a bad feeling in her stomach. Had she *really* agreed to tutor Steve, after telling Jonathan she wouldn't?

Looking back at it, she'd agreed because she'd felt bad for him; but now, with a clearer mind than she had last night, she immediately regretted it. She knew she couldn't tell Jonathan about it. And she didn't want to say no to Steve, after she'd already said yes.

"Nancy! Breakfast!" her mother called.

Letting out a sigh, she got up from bed.

Breakfast at the Wheeler table was quiet that morning. Nancy, because she was lost in thought about her predicament. And Mike, because he was still dreamy-eyed from his date with Eleven.

Noticing the quietness, Karen Wheeler asked if they were okay.

"Yeah, mom, of course," Nancy said, moving her eggs around on her plate.

"Huh?" Mike asked.

"Are you okay?" Karen repeated. "You two are quiet this morning."

"Yeah, I'm okay," Mike said, grinning from ear to ear as he speared a sausage with his fork.

"Mike, I'm going to need you to watch Holly again for a little while," Karen told her son.

Mike rolled his eyes. " *Again?* "

Calmly, she said, "Your father has to go to work, and I have a doctor's appointment this afternoon."

“Everything okay?” Nancy asked.

“Of course,” Karen said, “Just a yearly check up. But it’s a pain to bring Holly along. You’re going to be here anyway, so I need you to watch her for me.”

“But *mom* ...” Mike began.

“Listen to your mother, Mike,” his father said, turning the page in his newspaper.

“What about Nancy?” Mike asked.

“I have to work, too,” she answered.

“What were you planning on doing, anyway?” Karen asked.

“I was going to have my friends over,” Mike said.

“Well, they can come over when I get back,” she said. “I don’t want anybody over while I’m gone, you’re just going to ignore your sister.”

“Mom...”

“Listen to your mother,” Ted Wheeler interrupted.

“Fine,” Mike said glumly, looking at his plate.

After eating, Mike went down to the basement to find his Supercomm. Getting on the right channel, he called everyone and told them he had babysitting duty until further notice, and to not come over until he gave the all clear.

He then went back upstairs into the living room, where Holly was once again playing with her Barbie dolls while the TV played some cartoon Mike was too old for.

He sat at the kitchen table with his notebook. Where he sat he was far enough so the TV wouldn’t bother him and he could still keep an eye on Holly. His father and Nancy had already left, and his mother

was upstairs getting ready to go.

Opening his notebook, he looked over his to-do list with Eleven:

- *get ice cream*

- *go swimming*

- *fireworks on the Fourth of July*

- *catching fireflies*

- *asking her to be my girlfriend*

- *telling her I love her*

A smile came to his lips as he realized he only had two things left; he'd made a lot of progress in just a few short days. Seeing how it was only a few weeks into June, he still couldn't do fireworks. As for the love part, he thought about telling her the next time he saw her. In fact...

Smiling, he got up from the table. "Holly, don't die for five minutes!" he called as he walked quickly to the basement.

Turning on his Supercomm, he asked, "El?"

There was nothing but static at first. After a few seconds, he heard her voice.

"Mike?"

He smiled. "Hey. Uh, how are you?"

"Good. How are you?"

"Fine. Um....are you busy tomorrow?"

"No."

“Okay, cool. Um, do you want to come over tomorrow? There's, uh...there's something I want to tell you.”

“Okay.”

He couldn't keep the smile off his face. “Okay. Over and out.”

He spent the next few hours writing things down for that night's campaign and half heartedly watching his little sister. Besides go to her room to get more dolls and asking for juice, she didn't do much.

A little after four o'clock, he was happy to hear the keys opening the front door and his mom calling, “Kids, I'm home.”

“OkaymomHolly'swatchingtvbye!” he said as he jumped up from the couch and went into the basement. Flipping on the Supercomm, he called his friends and told them it was clear for them to come over.

One by one, the boys arrived at the basement door; Lucas first, followed by Will and then Dustin.

The four boys spent the next five hours in the basement, just like old times. Playing D & D, eating pizza, and cracking jokes on one another. At a little past nine, as the game was winding down, they all took a break. Lucas beat Dustin to the downstairs bathroom. Dustin sighed and went upstairs to use the facilities.

“How was your date with El?” Will asked Mike.

Mike smiled. “Pretty good.” Then, realizing it was just the two of them, he decided to tell Will what he'd decided earlier. Leaning over the table, he whispered “Hey, can I tell you something?”

“Um...sure,” Will responded.

“Tomorrow I'm going to ask El over, and I'm going to...” he blushed, thinking about it, “I'm going to tell her I love her.”

Will's eyes widened. “Wow, really?”

Mike nodded.

“Wow. That’s, uh...that’s great, Mike.”

Mike furrowed his brow. “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing, it’s just that...”

“Okay, let’s defeat this Rust Monster,” Lucas said, coming out of the bathroom. Taking his seat at the table, he saw the confused look on Mike’s face and a worried look on Will’s. “What?” he asked them.

“It’s nothing,” Will said, leaning back against his chair.

“Yeah,” Mike said, some of his pep turning into hesitant curiosity.

A few minutes later Dustin came down, and the boys finished the game, howling in celebration as they defeated the monsters in their way.

Mike tried to remain in Dungeon Master mode while they finished, but Will’s reaction to his secret had him worried, taking away some of his joy. When the game finished, he walked with the group to the garage as they got their bikes.

Will, sensing that something was off with Mike, hung back as Lucas and Dustin biked into the night, still talking excitedly about their victory.

“Um...” Mike began. “What were you going to say, earlier? You know, about El?”

Will sighed. “I...she...I talked to her on Sunday.”

“When?”

“Hopper came over to help my mom. El and I talked. She, uh...she asked me if you were in love with her.”

Mike felt his face flush as his eyes widened. “Really?”

“Yeah, really.”

“What’d you say?”

“I told her yeah, that you were.”

Mike grinned.

“And then I asked if she was in love with you. And she said she didn’t know.”

The grin Mike had been sporting seconds before disappeared. “Oh.”

“That doesn’t mean she doesn’t feel that way, Mike,” Will said. “Maybe she just...I don’t know, needed to think about it.”

“Maybe,” Mike said, but Will could already see the damage he’d done.

“I’m sorry for telling you,” Will told his friend.

Mike weakly shook his head. “No, it’s...thanks for telling me.”

“Okay. Just...call me on the Supercomm if you need to talk.”

“Yeah. Okay,” Mike said, head down.

With one last look at his friend, Will kicked off, and rode into the night.

Mike sulked his way into his bedroom, flopping on the bed. He just wanted to shut his eyes and shut everything out. He knew he was in love with Eleven, and up until three minutes ago, he’d thought she felt the same. It could be true, what Will said, that she needed time to think about it. But now, the thought of possibly inviting her over tomorrow and telling her how he felt felt like a waste of time, or at the very least an embarrassing waste of time.

He turned his head, and saw the Supercomm on his nightstand. He thought about calling her and telling her not to bother coming over tomorrow, but it was late, and he’d do it in the morning. Sighing, he turned off his light and tried to fall asleep.

The next morning, Eleven woke up with a smile on her face. She wasn't a hundred percent sure why Mike wanted her to come over, but he said he wanted to tell her something. She had an idea what it was, but she wasn't sure.

She thought he was going to tell her he was in love with her. After her talk with Will about that particular phrase, she'd given it some thought. She had thought about her talk with Joyce back in February, when Joyce had defined the word for her:

"In love means when you really like someone, like a lot. You want to be with them all of the time, and you're always thinking about them."

And that was *definitely* how she felt about Mike. So she knew now, she was in love with him. Even if he invited her over to tell her something else, she, at least, would tell him today.

After showering, she put on a skirt and a shirt that she knew Mike liked, and was ready to go out, when she heard her Supercomm crackling.

Then, a voice. "El?" It was Mike.

Smiling, she picked it up. "Mike?"

"H-hey."

"Hi. I'm about to come over, is that okay?"

"Oh. Um, well...that's why I called. I, uh...I'm kind of busy today, so maybe we can talk some other time, okay?"

She frowned. "Okay. Are you alright?" He sounded sad, defeated.

"Yeah, I'm alright. I'll talk to you later, El, bye." And with that, he clicked off.

Eleven sat on her bed, still frowning. What was wrong? She'd really wanted to see him. Letting out a sigh, she put the Supercomm back on her bedside table and went out into the kitchen.

Hopper was sitting on the couch, enjoying watching some TV before he had to go in. Seeing the look on her face, he asked, "Everything alright? You still going over to see Mike?"

She shook her head, sitting next to him on the couch. "No."

"Why not?"

"He is...upset."

"Oh, boy," Hopper said. Then, "What's got his panties in a bunch?"

"What?"

"Nothing. Why's he upset?"

Eleven shrugged her shoulders.

"Well, why don't you find out?"

Nodding her head, she got up and went back to her room.

"Kids," Hopper muttered, going back to the TV.

In her room, Eleven tried calling Mike, but got no answer. Frowning, she sat at the small desk she had in her room. Not sure what to do, she took out a pencil and a piece of paper. After putting a title on the top, she numbered one through five on the side. Taking a deep breath, she started writing.

At the Wheeler home, Karen Wheeler was clearing the table. Mike was still sitting there, head in his left hand, looking forlorn as his right hand pushed the remnants of his breakfast around his plate.

“What’s wrong, sweetie?” she asked.

“Nothing,” he said quietly.

She sat down next to him. “Mike. You can talk to me.”

He looked up for a second, then back at his plate. “Nothing’s wrong.”

Karen sighed. “Is it Eleven?” When he didn’t answer, she continued. “Did you two have a fight?”

“No,” he mumbled.

“Well, then what’s going on?”

As Mike contemplated talking to his mother about the situation, Nancy came down the stairs, backpack in hand. “Alright, mom, I’ll be back in a little bit.”

Karen looked up. “Where are you going?”

“The library,” Nancy said, getting her keys. “I’m tutoring someone.”

Standing, Karen asked, “Who?”

“A...someone from school, you don’t know them. I’ll be back in a few hours. Bye!” And with that, she was out the door.

Curious, Karen turned back towards the table. “Do you know...”

But Mike was gone.

On the drive to the library, Nancy kept shaking her head. *All I’m going to do is give him some pointers*, she said to herself. *An hour, MAX. Then I’m leaving*.

She had talked to Jonathan, briefly, on the phone last night. He had to work this afternoon, but later they were going to get together and do something. She hadn’t told him what she was doing, today, obviously, and it kept eating away at her. She tried to justify it by telling herself she was only doing this *once*.

At the Byers, the family was sitting at the table eating the breakfast Jonathan had made, while Will bombarded everyone with facts about sharks:

“Did you know that sharks have been around for 400 million years?

And there’s 400 different *kinds* of sharks.

They can grow 20, 000 teeth in their life!

And did you know that sharks never run out of teeth. If they lose one, another spins forward from the rows of backup teeth.”

“Geez, Will,” his mother said, putting a hand to her mouth. “Why all of this information about sharks all of a sudden?”

“He was up late last night,” Jonathan said.

“I had a nightmare,” Will admitted.

“Are you okay?” Joyce asked, touching his arm. The nightmares had died down since his return from the Upside Down, but every so often she would wake up to either him screaming or crying.

“I’m okay,” he said. “I couldn’t fall back asleep, so I read that book I got from the library last year, the one on sharks?”

“I thought you lost that book,” Joyce said.

“I thought I did. I guess I didn’t,” Will shrugged, finishing his pancakes.

“The fine’s gotta be, like, three hundred dollars by now,” Jonathan said, chuckling.

Joyce shook her head. “Jonathan, take him over there after breakfast.” Getting up, she went to her purse and came back with a

ten dollar bill. "And give Marissa this, to see if that can make up the late fee."

"It's gonna take more than that," Jonathan said.

"That's all we can give right now," Joyce said, sitting back down. "Oh, shoot! You have to work today, don't you? I can take Will."

Jonathan shook his head. "Melanie called this morning, said she'd take my shift. I'll take him, mom."

"Okay, thanks," she said.

"I still don't get it," Steve said, chuckling at the notebook he had in front of him.

Nancy sighed. They'd been at it for almost an hour, and either Steve really wasn't getting it, or he was just putting her on.

She wanted to leave, and soon. She was afraid someone would see them, and she was trying to be inconspicuous. She pointed out a problem in the textbook she'd brought. "Try it again."

Still smiling, Steve said, "Okay, but it's not going to do any good." A few minutes later, he solved the problem, and slid the notebook her way. "See?"

She looked it over and couldn't help the small smile that came to her face. "You got it right, Steve."

"Really?" he asked, sitting up and looking at the problem. "Wow. You must know what you're doing, Nance."

Turning a page, she found another problem and wrote it down in the notebook. "Now do this one."

He tried, and a minute later, turned the notebook again, looking to her for confirmation.

Again, a small smile crept onto her face as she nodded, saying “Yeah, that’s right.”

“Yes!” Steve said, a little louder than necessary. A few people turned their way and shot them a dirty look.

“ *Shhh* ,” Nancy said.

“Sorry. But, hey, I’m getting it! Summer school’s gonna be a piece of cake.”

“I hardly think so,” Nancy said, showing him the cover of the textbook she’d brought. “This is *intro* to trigonometry.”

“Oh.”

“But,” she continued, “if you get this down, you’ll have a good foundation for your summer class.”

“Okay. Good.” He leaned a little closer, causing Nancy to raise an eyebrow. “Thank you, Nance.”

“For what?”

“For helping me. I know I...I was an asshole, when we were together, and...”

“And I’m just helping you, Steve. We’re not getting back together.”

“I know, it’s just...you didn’t have to.”

She gave him a polite smile. “You’re welcome. Let’s do another, shall we?”

Outside, Jonathan and Will had just parked and were headed in.

“I think I’m going to get a book on tigers,” Will said.

“They’re not going to let you get another book, this one is, like, a year overdue.”

“Do you still have that ten?” Will asked.

“Yeah, but that’s not going to settle it,” Jonathan said, opening the doors. As he did, he thought he saw Nancy’s car parked a few spaces down from his. But why would she be here?

The Byers boys made their way to the front desk, and Jonathan gave Marissa, the librarian, the ten dollar bill and the shark book.

Will asked if he could get a new book today.

“Not until you pay the fine all of the way,” she answered.

“How much is left?” Jonathan asked.

“Twenty dollars is the biggest a fine can be,” Marissa said. “I don’t guess you have another ten dollars, do you?”

“No, we don’t,” Jonathan said.

“Well, I’m sorry, boys, but you can’t check anything else out until you pay this off.”

Nodding his head, Jonathan put his arm around his brother. “We’ll just come back tomorrow, okay?”

“Okay,” Will said, agreeing. The two turned to go, and as they did, saw Nancy and Steve walking together towards the exit as well.

Jonathan stopped. Nancy’s eyes got as big as dinner plates.

“Hey, Byers,” Steve said to Jonathan.

“Uh, what...what are you two doing here?” Jonathan asked.

“I, uh...I was helping Steve,” Nancy said quietly.

“Oh?” Jonathan asked.

“She was a big help, too,” Steve said, smiling.

“Oh. Okay,” Jonathan said, face turning red in embarrassment. Clutching Will’s shoulder a little tighter, he said, “We have to go.”

The two walked briskly past Nancy and Steve and went to the parking lot.

Nancy ran after them. Will got into the car, and Jonathan was about to, when she caught up.

“Jonathan, *wait* . I can explain...”

“You said you weren’t *going* to,” Jonathan said, face still red. “You lied.”

“Jonathan, I know,” she pleaded. “I’m sorry, I just...”

“You just *what* ?” he nearly shouted at her.

“Hey, calm down, man,” Steve said, making his way over. “She was just helping me out, okay? That’s all.”

“Fuck off,” Jonathan said, glaring at Steve.

“Jonathan, I’m sorry,” Nancy said, taking his hand. “I shouldn’t...”

Jonathan yanked his hand away, shaking his head. “I’m out of here,” he said. He got into his car, revved the engine, and pulled out the parking spot quickly.

Nancy watched him go, tears threatening to come.

“I’m sorry,” Steve told her.

Nancy had no response as she watched Jonathan’s car disappear.

Originally, Mike's plan had been to have El over in the afternoon, tell her he loved her, and maybe kiss or hang out for a while with her before the boys came over. During the D & D game yesterday, the group had planned on getting together to watch E.T. in Mike's basement. But after he canceled El's visit, he spent the majority of the afternoon in his bed, debating whether or not to tell the boys to come over some other day.

By six o'clock, it was too late, and he was woken out of his stupor by light knocking on his bedroom door.

"Mike?" It was Lucas.

Mike got out of bed, and opened the door. Lucas took one look at his best friend, and asked "What's wrong with you?"

"Nothing." Mike pushed past him to head into the basement.

Following behind him, Lucas asked, "For real, Mike. What's up?"

The two got to the basement, and Mike plopped onto the couch. "I don't want to talk about it."

Lucas folded his arms. "You know I'm not gonna stop until you tell me." When Mike didn't say anything, Lucas repeated "MikeMikeMikeMike..."

"Okay!" Mike said loudly.

"Well?" Lucas said, expectantly.

Mike sighed. Before Lucas had come over, he had been considering something. Letting out another sigh, he told his friend.

"I think I wanna break up with El."

Notes for the Chapter:

DUNH-DUNH-DUNH!!

next chapter should be up by Friday.

5. Me and You

Notes for the Chapter:

Sorry it took so long...didn't have time to write.

“ *What?!* ” Lucas shrieked.

“Stop yelling, my mom’s gonna hear,” Mike said.

“You just told me that you want to break up with El, and you're telling me not to yell? What's wrong with you?” Lucas asked, a little quieter.

“Nothing's wrong, I just....I don't think she's ready to date yet.”

Not buying it, Lucas asked, “What's really going on, Mike?”

“Nothing is going on, Lucas. I shouldn't have told you; it's none of your business, anyway.”

“Um, El is my friend, too, so I think this has *some* thing to do with me. Didn't you *just* go on a date with her?”

“Yeah...”

“And how did it go?”

“Good, I thought.”

Lucas rolled his eyes. “Then why...” He was interrupted by a knocking at the downstairs door. Sighing, Mike went and opened it to let both Dustin and Will in.

“What's up, ladies?” Dustin asked as he walked in.

“Noth-” Mike began.

“Mike says he's going to break up with Eleven,” Lucas said, cutting him off.

Dustin’s jaw dropped, and Will looked at the floor, shaking his head.

“ *What?* ” Dustin asked.

“Don't yell,” Mike said to him.

“What is *wrong* with you?” Dustin asked.

“Nothing,” Mike said. “I just-”

“It's my fault,” Will said quietly.

The boys looked at him. Lucas asked, “What do you mean?”

“It's my fault,” Will repeated. “Eleven-”

“Will, don't,” Mike said.

Ignoring him, Will continued. “I talked to Eleven the other day. I told her that Mike... *really* likes her.”

Mike was looking at his feet.

“I asked her if she ‘really’ likes him, too, and she said she didn’t know.”

“What do you mean ‘really’ like?” Dustin asked, confused.

“It means love, Dustin,” Lucas said, looking at Mike. “It means Mike’s in love with her.”

They couldn’t see Mike’s face, since he was looking at his feet, but they could see his cheeks go red.

“And she’s not?” Dustin asked.

“Yes she is,” Lucas said.

“No, she *isn't* , which is why I don’t think I should date her anymore.” Mike said, getting up from the couch. “Let’s just watch the stupid movie.”

Will stood in front of him, blocking access to the TV.

“Move, Will, I...”

“No,” Will said, with an authority he didn’t know he had in him. “Eleven feels the same way you do, Mike.”

“Yeah, feelings and stuff are...strange to her,” Lucas said.

“Right. But everyone knows how you two feel about each other,” Will said. “I shouldn’t have told you what we talked about. But even when I was talking to her, when she said she...didn’t know, or whatever...I could tell that she does, Mike.”

“Don’t be an idiot,” Dustin chimed in.

Mike just shook his head. “You guys are just saying that to make me feel better.”

“No, we’re not,” Lucas said. “Because right now I don’t care how you feel, because you’re acting stupid.” Mike shot him a look, but Lucas didn’t care. “We’re telling you the truth. You’re just too pigheaded to believe us.”

“Screw you,” Mike said, crossing his arms. “You guys just don’t want it to be weird when she comes over.”

“She’s our friend, too,” Will said. “And yeah, it’d be weird if you two broke up, but it’d be...”

“Dumb,” Dustin said for him.

“Yeah, *dumb* of you to break up with her. She loves you, Mike, she really does. Just...don’t do anything stupid, okay?”

Still with his arms folded, Mike reluctantly nodded his head. “Fine.”

So they eventually got Mike to agree that he wouldn’t break off things with her *yet*. The boys spent so much time arguing with Mike that by the time they were ready to watch E.T., it was too late. They all agreed to meet tomorrow.

. . .

Upstairs, Nancy was in her room, trying desperately to get through to her boyfriend, Jonathan. She called and called; either Joyce or Will picked up, and said he wasn't home, or the phone just rang.

She was so mad at herself for lying, and saying yes to Steve. *What kind of person does that?* she asked herself. Especially with an ex. Eventually she gave up on calling, and fell onto her back on her bed in frustration. She *had* to make things right. But how?

. . .

The next morning, Eleven was woken up by her Supercomm crackling, and a voice calling her name. Excitedly, she picked it up. "Mike?" she asked, hopefully.

"Uh, no, it's Will," he said.

"Oh."

"Um, we're going over to Mike's later to watch E.T. You wanna come with us?"

"Okay."

"Cool. I'll come pick you up in a few hours."

"Um...Hop can drive me. When are you going?"

So they worked out the details and then they both clicked off, and Eleven got out of bed. She put on the same clothes from yesterday-the shirt Mike liked and a skirt-and had a quick breakfast while she waited for Hopper to wake up.

"How are things in Wheeler-ville?" Hopper asked when he finally came out of his room.

"I still don't know," she said. "I am going over today. Can you drive me?"

"Yeah, sure."

She smiled and gave him a quick kiss on his cheek.

A little bit later, Hopper was ready. Eleven put on her shoes and was about to leave, when she remembered something. Running back to her room, she grabbed the piece of paper she had used at her desk yesterday, folded it, and put it into one of the pockets of her skirt.

When she got outside and into his truck, Hopper gave her a smile. "Ready?"

She nodded. "Ready."

. . .

At the Wheeler home, the family was finishing breakfast. Karen noticed, for the second day in a row, the quiet in the room. Mike had been pushing around a pancake for the better part of five minutes as he looked sadly at it. Nancy was eating like her normal self, but her mind seemed elsewhere.

As her children finished off what remained on their plates, she asked them a question.

"So what's going on with you two?"

"What?" Nancy asked, looking up.

Karen smiled. "How are things with Jonathan?"

That got Nancy looking back down at her plate. "Ok."

"And Mike?"

"Huh?"

“Is everything alright?”

“Uh...yeah, I guess. My friends are coming over.”

“What about Eleven? She hasn’t been over here in a few days.”

That got Mike to look back at his own plate. “She’s, uh...she’s been busy.” Popping the last pancake piece into his mouth, he gathered his plate and glass of milk, standing up. “Thanks for breakfast, mom,” he said, walking to put his dishes away.

Karen watched him go and, seconds later, Nancy stood and did the same with her dishes.

Karen turned to her husband. “I think something’s going on with those two,” she told him.

Ted shrugged his shoulders. “They seem fine to me.”

. . . .

Minutes later, Nancy was grabbing her keys as she got ready to head to the Byers’ home to confront Jonathan. Telling her parents goodbye, she went out the front door. She’d only taken a few steps when she stopped. Steve was parked at the end of the driveway, getting out of his car.

“Hi, Nance,” he said, giving her a smile. “Glad I caught you.”

“Now’s not a good time, Steve,” she said as she walked towards her car.

“This’ll only take a minute, I swear,” he said, cutting her off.

She stopped, sighed, and turned towards him. “What do you want?”

“I just...” Nancy was standing by her door, and Steve was leaning against the car, a few feet from her. He took a step towards her, and

she took a step back. Smiling, he continued. "I want to say thank you, for helping me yesterday. I know it got you in trouble with Jonathan...you want me to talk to him?"

"No," she said. "I shouldn't even be talking to you. What do you want?"

"Oh. Um...well, can we meet again? Summer school starts next Monday, and I was hoping..."

"No," she said again. "I'm sorry, but I'm not going to tutor you, Steve. You're going to have to find somebody else."

"But Nance..."

"No," she repeated, scooting him out of the way so she could get into her car. "Find somebody else."

She got in and closed the door. Before starting the car, she glanced up at him. "Good luck."

And with that, she started the ignition, backed out, and drove away.

. . .

Lucas, Will, and Dustin came over to the Wheeler house soon after. Mike let them in; the boys talked briefly about what they wanted to do after the movie, then turned to go into the basement, when there was another knock at the door.

Confused, Mike went to open it, and was surprised to see it was Eleven.

"Oh. Hi, El. What are you doing here?" he asked.

Eleven, who'd been smiling, felt her smile drop a little. "Um...Will asked me if I wanted to come over."

“Oh. Um, okay.” He moved aside as she walked in. When he closed the door, she was right there, looking at him; as well as three other pair of eyes, standing at the foot of the stairs.

“Do you guys mind?” Mike asked his friends.

The boys sighed, and turned to go into the basement. “Hurry up!” Dustin called over his shoulder.

Eleven gave Mike another smile, then stood closer and kissed his cheek. But instead of his usual smile in return, or kissing her back, he gave her a small, barely there smile, and asked, “Are you ready to see the movie?”

She couldn’t hide the disappointment on her face. Quietly, she said, “I guess so.”

Mike led the way into the basement. In his mind, he was both kicking himself and trying to rationalize how he was treating her:

All I want to do is hold her hand and kiss her back.

She doesn’t feel the same way that you do.

Tell her how pretty she looks today!

She’s not in love with you.

When the pair got into the basement, the boys had already set the movie up on the VCR. Lucas and Will sat on the floor, in front of it, while Dustin sat on the couch. When they saw Mike and El coming down the stairs, Lucas whispered Dustin’s name, and nodded towards the floor. The curly haired boy got up and joined Will and Lucas.

Mike and El sat next to each other on the couch, as Lucas pressed play.

. . .

At the Byers', Nancy knocked on the front door and waited. A minute later she heard the shuffling of feet, and the lock being turned. When the door opened, it was Joyce that greeted her, not Jonathan.

"Hi, Ms. Byers," Nancy said. "Is Jonathan home?"

"No, sorry, he's at work," Joyce said. Then, looking concerned, asked "Is something going on between you two?"

Nancy sighed. "He's, um...he's mad at me." Nancy explained to Joyce what the problem was.

When she finished, Joyce nodded her head. "Well...Jonathan can be stubborn. But he *really* cares about you, Nancy. I'm sure if you just give him some time, he'll come around." She rubbed the young girl's arm. "I'm sorry."

Nancy nodded. "Okay. Well...thank you, Ms. Byers."

"Call me Joyce, sweetie."

Nancy smiled, and turned to go to her car.

. . .

Back in the basement, the group was a third of the way through the film. Will and Lucas kept stealing glances at Mike and Eleven, but weren't happy with what they observed.

Eleven had began the film with some space between she and Mike, but she felt uncomfortable. When they usually watched movies together, her head would be on his shoulder, or they'd be snuggled up to the point the boys would fake throw up, or tell them to get a room. But today, Mike was just so...cold towards her.

Wanting to get back to normal, she reached for his hand, and held it. But it wasn't like when they usually held hands; he had no grip, he didn't hold hers in return. Instead he just looked forward, his hand like a dead fish in hers.

Meanwhile, Mike was continuing to go back and forth in his head. He *wanted* to hold her hand, he *wanted* to tell her how pretty she looked; he knew she was wearing that shirt because she looked so pretty in it. And a skirt...

But he wasn't letting himself forget; this was the girl who didn't love him, who didn't feel the way that he did, that even if she *did* say she loved him, would just be saying it to make him feel better. So for the time being, he kept his hand in hers, but didn't grasp it like he usually did.

When the movie reached the halfway point, Mike pulled his flaccid hand from hers and got up from the couch. "Anyone want a snack?" he asked.

"Chips," Dustin said.

"You have any Twinkies?" Lucas asked.

"I'll check," Mike told him. "El?"

"No, thank you," she said, smoothing out her skirt. Then, with a look of hope in her eye, asked, "Can I help?"

"No," he said, shaking his head and going towards the stairs. "I got it." And with that, he climbed up the stairs.

Frowning, El tried to look back at the television screen, but she kept turning her head towards the stairs. *What was wrong?*

Not being able to take it anymore, she stood up and went upstairs.

She found him in the kitchen, putting chips into a bowl. He glanced at her when she came in, then went back to the chips.

"I said I got it, El," he told her.

"Mike?" she asked.

"Yeah?"

"Why won't you talk to me?"

He sighed. "It's nothing, El. Okay?"

But it didn't feel like nothing, she thought. It felt like everything. She walked closer. "Talk to me."

Closing the chips bag with a little more force than needed, he said "It's nothing, El." He turned and went upstairs.

Eleven watched him go, wondering whether to follow him or not, when she heard Will say her name behind her. Turning, she saw him standing at the foot of the stairs.

"What's wrong with Mike?" El asked.

Will was looking at his feet, not looking forward to this conversation. "He's mad."

"At me?"

Will nodded his head.

Eleven's eyebrows went up in confusion. "What did I do?"

Will shook his head, as he walked further into the kitchen. "It's *my* fault, El. Mike...I told him about our...talk the other day. You know, when we were drawing?"

Eleven felt a pain in her chest; Mike thought she didn't love him? Then, another realization came to her.

"Why would you say that to him?" she asked Will.

Will, not wanting to spill *all* the details again, simply said, "We were just talking, and it came out. I'm so sorry, El. But I invited you to come over because, well...Mike's pretty upset. And we thought if you

talked with him..."

Eleven sighed, and then a look of determination came upon her face. Turning, she headed upstairs.

After locking his door, Mike sat on his bed, pouting. He didn't want to go back downstairs, he didn't want to see El right now. Heck, he wasn't sure if he wanted to see the boys right now; he was mad at them for inviting Eleven over.

There was a light knock at his door. "Mike?" Eleven's quiet voice asked.

He sighed. "I don't want to talk right now, El," he answered.

He heard the lock pop, and the door opened. Eleven walked in, wiping at her nose.

Mike rolled his eyes.

Giving him a small smile, she sat next to him on the bed. "What's wrong, Mike?" she asked.

He wouldn't look at her. He *couldn't*. How could he? Here was the girl he was in love with, but she didn't feel the same way. He felt like he'd been lied to. "Nothing's wrong, El."

She took his hand again. " *Mike* . Will told me that he talked to you." Mike glanced at her, then looked away. Eleven continued. "I don't know why I said 'I don't know,' because, Mike, I do..."

Pulling his hand from her, he scooted away. "You're just gonna say it to make me feel better, but I don't want you to, El. You don't say *that* just to say it. It's....it's important, and you're not supposed to say it if you're not ready, and I guess I thought..."

He got interrupted by Eleven moving over and holding his face, kissing him. He held her arms, but didn't pull out of it. If this was the end, he figured, he may as well get in one last kiss.

When they pulled away, she kept her hands where they were. "Why do you think I don't love you, Mike?" She smiled. "How could I not?"

He blushed, but looked down.

Pulling away, she reached into her pocket. Coming out with a folded piece of paper, she put it in his hand. Giving him one last smile, she stood up and left the room.

Confused, Mike unfolded the piece of paper:

Things That Make Me Happy, by Eleven Hopper

1. Eggo's, because they taste so good
2. Being outside, because the sun feels good on my skin
3. Dustin, Lucas, and Will, for always making me laugh and being friends with me
4. Hopper, because he loves me and takes care of me
5. Mike, because I am in love with him. He is my favorite person, and the best person I know. He always makes me feel sparkly inside when I see him and I can't stop smiling when I think about him and his freckles. He is such a good person because he is so giving of himself. I hope he loves me, too.

A smile worked its way onto his face as he finished reading the list. Did she love him? He was afraid she was just saying it to make him feel better. But now, after reading this...

He didn't care anymore. He loved her. And he couldn't see himself without her.

Getting up, he left his room.

When Mike got down to the basement, his friends were so engrossed in the movie that they almost didn't notice his arrival. Eleven was still sitting on the couch, her hands fidgeting in her lap. Mike went and sat next to her and, without saying anything, took one of her hands into his.

Eleven smiled.

. . .

At Big Buy, Jonathan was loading potatoes onto a display, but his mind, of course, was elsewhere. He kept playing and replaying the encounter with Nancy in his head. He wasn't nearly as mad as he'd been yesterday, but he felt... *hurt* . Hurt that she'd lied to him, obviously. And, to be honest, a little...jealous.

He wasn't one to dwell on looks or popularity, but he knew that Nancy could be doing much better than him. She was gorgeous, smart, funny, and he...well, he was Jonathan Byers. And seeing her again with the goofy, popular, and better-looking-than-he-was Steve Harrington, some old insecurities had come crawling back to the surface. Deep down he knew he'd overreacted; he had a right to be mad, but he thought he may have been a little over the top.

That still didn't mean he wanted to talk to Nancy, yet. He'd been avoiding her calls since last night, his mom asking repeatedly why he was denying her numerous phone calls. He'd just shaken his head, and said nothing.

So he was surprised when he looked up for a second and saw Nancy talking to one of the cashiers, and the cashier pointing his way.

Crap , he thought. In a futile effort, he shoved the remaining food onto the display, but doing so caused a landslide of vegetables spilling onto the tiled floor. A co-worker, Robert, came over and helped him stack them back up. They'd gotten halfway done when Jonathan looked up and saw Nancy standing over him.

Sighing, he stood. "Um, Robert, can you give us a minute?" he asked.

Robert nodded, picking up two more potatoes and dropping them into the display before turning away.

"Hey," Jonathan said.

“Hey,” she replied.

“What’re you doing here?”

“You’ve been avoiding my calls, Jonathan, I had to do *something* .”

“I know, I know,” he mumbled. “But now’s not a good time.”

“Jonathan....” she reached for his arm.

He took a step back. “Nancy, I can’t do this right now,” he said, picking a few more vegetables from the floor.

“Then *when* ?” she asked, a little loudly. “When are you going to let me apologize to you? When are you going to let me tell you how sorry I am, for...”

“You *lied* to me!” he said, also loudly. A few nearby customers were looking their way. “I told you that I didn’t like you tutoring Steve, but you did it *any* way. Do you have any idea how that hurts me? How...little it makes me feel?”

Neither spoke for a few moments; Jonathan calming down, and Nancy unsure of what to say.

“Why’d you do it, anyway?” he finally asked.

“I don’t know,” Nancy said. “I...I felt sorry for him, I guess. And it was supposed to be just *one* time, to get him started.” She shook her head. “But it doesn’t matter, I shouldn’t have done it.”

“He’s just doing it to try and get back with you,” Jonathan mumbled.

“Is that what you think?” she asked. She walked a little closer; he didn’t move this time.

“Jonathan, he wanted my *help* . But even if he didn’t, even if he...had tried something, it wouldn’t have mattered, because I’m with you.”

Jonathan, who’d been avoiding her eyes, finally looked at her.

She held his hands. “It was stupid of me to try and tutor him.” Letting

a small grin come to her face, she muttered “He hasn’t even paid me yet...but, you’re right. I told you I wasn’t going to do it, and I shouldn’t have. I’m sorry.”

Jonathan allowed a small smile to creep to his lips. “It wouldn’t have mattered?”

She smiled back. “No. You’re my boyfriend. Probably the best boyfriend I’ve had. And I’m not going anywhere.”

“Promise?”

“Promise.”

With her hands on his neck, and his arms around her waist, they pulled each other closer for an embrace, followed by a kiss. The small audience that had gathered began clapping for them, causing the two lovebirds to pull apart, grinning and blushing.

“Show’s over, show’s over,” Jonathan said. The customers dispersed.

“Can I see you tonight?” Nancy asked.

“Yeah,” he answered.

They shared one more quick kiss before he went back to work and Nancy left to go home, smiling with happiness.

. . .

Back in the basement, the movie had just finished.

“Awesome,” Dustin said, standing and stretching.

Lucas and Will nodded in agreement as they, too, stood and stretched.

Mike and Eleven stayed where they were, still holding hands. Will, noticing, picked up the bowl of chips. “I’ll, uh...I’ll take this upstairs,”

he said, motioning for Lucas and Dustin to follow.

Lucas didn't get it at first, but Dustin whacked his shoulder, and the three boys climbed the stairs.

Once he heard the upstairs door close, Mike turned to Eleven. "Hi."

She smiled. "Hi."

"Look, El," Mike began, "I'm...I'm sorry for being such a..."

"Mouth breather?"

"Well, yeah, but I was going to say...asshole."

She smiled.

"I told you back in February that I could never be mad at you, and the way I acted today, I wouldn't blame you for....not wanting to be my girlfriend anymore."

"Mike?"

"Yeah?"

"You are a mouth breather. But...you're *my* mouth breather. And my boyfriend."

"Still?"

She nodded her head. "I forgive you."

Blushing, Mike asked, "Um...is it okay if I kissed you?"

She looked confused. "Why're you asking?"

"I don't know, I'm stupid." And with that, they both leaned in, their lips meeting in the middle as her hands went through his hair, and he pulled her closer. When they pulled apart, she snuggled into his side.

After a moment, Mike asked, "Um...what you wrote. Did you mean that?"

Her head on his chest, she moved it up and down, nodding.

Letting out a sigh he didn't know he'd been holding, Mike finally said what he'd been wanting to say for a while. "Eleven?"

"Yes?" she asked, looking up at him.

"I love you."

She raised her head off his chest, and smiled back at him. Leaning in, she gave him a deep kiss. When she pulled away, she kept her face inches from his. "I love you, too, Mike."

Grinning, Mike pulled her in for another kiss, before she settled her head on his shoulder. They sat there in blissful silence for a minute before they heard the basement door open and some whispers:

"What are they doing?"

"Are they making out?"

"Go down and see."

"*I* don't want to, *you* go down."

"Guys, come on..."

"Fine."

"We're good, guys!" Mike called up.

A second later, they heard footsteps, and Lucas came down to the bottom of the stairs. Seeing the two of them cuddled up, he rolled his eyes and called, "Guys, they're fine, now!"

Dustin and Will bounded down the stairs. When they saw Mike and Eleven, Will smiled, and Dustin said "Ew, get a room, you guys!"

"We *had* a room until you came back," Mike said in return.

"So, everything's fine, now?" Will asked.

Raising herself off of Mike, Eleven nodded her head.

“Good.”

. . .

Mike was finally able to cross out “see fireworks” a few weeks later, when the Wheelers threw their annual Fourth of July barbecue.

The boys came over, as did Jonathan, and Eleven absolutely loved having barbecue for the first time, going as far as copying Dustin and licking the excess sauce off of her fingers.

After eating, the group got sparklers, and Mike showed her how to use it:

“You wave it around,” he said, demonstrating. “But you gotta let go before the spark reaches your hand.”

She nodded in understanding.

When all of the sparklers were lit, El twirled hers around, spelling out “Eleven” with sparks, then she watched the boys being silly with theirs; Lucas and Dustin made a five dollar bet to see who could hold theirs the longest; Mike and Will acted out a scene from *The Empire Strikes Back* with theirs. El giggled as she watched her friends, enjoying the moment.

When it was time for the actual fireworks, the kids all sat on the grass as Ted lit them in the street.

Before the first one went off, Mike whispered to El, “It’s going to be loud, okay? Just be ready for it.”

“Is it scary?” she asked.

“At first, maybe, but you get used to it. It’s fun.”

She held his hand as Mike’s father lit the first one. There was a loud shriek, followed by a trail of bright light as the first firecracker sailed

into the sky, followed by a ‘pop’.

When it first went off, El flinched into Mike’s shoulder, but relaxed as she watched it fly into the darkness. Next to her, Lucas, Dustin, and Will “oohed” and “ahhed.”

As Ted continued to set off more, Eleven relaxed, and even clapped and smiled as the night sky lit up with fluorescent colors.

By the end of the night, she couldn’t stop smiling.

After the boys rode home, Mike and Eleven stayed out side, waiting for Hopper to pick her up. With it being the Fourth and all, he was pretty busy making sure people didn’t go too far with their celebrations.

“How’d you like the Fourth?” Mike asked her as they sat outside, looking at the sky.

“I liked it,” she said. “I liked it a lot.”

Mike smiled. “El?”

“Yes?” she asked, looking at him.

“I love you.”

She smiled back at him. “I love you, too.”

They kissed, and Eleven could have sworn that even more fireworks went off inside of her.

Mike smiled, too. He loved her. She loved him. All was good.

Notes for the Chapter:

Thank you so much for reading. Please leave a comment if you liked the story/series (I like comments); if you didn't like it, well, hopefully I'll do better next time.

I think I will eventually be coming back to this series, I have another idea in mind.

So in the not too distant future I'm going to be writing another series that won't be *as* fluffy. I still have a lot of story ideas, and am trying to get as many done before season 2 comes out, since I have a feeling things are going to change.

Again, thank you to those who have read/commented/left kudos/and subscribed.